CHAPTER XV

ACINTYA-KHYĀTI

Now, I shall briefly present a theory which is metaphysically perhaps the nearest approach to Advaitavāda, excluding its māyāvāda, and is at the same time ethically its deadliest enemy. This theory of error is called Acintya-khyāti by its protagonist, Jīva Gosvāmin, a devout ascetic follower of Śree Caitanya, the founder of the Bengal School of Vaisnavism characterised by (so-called) emotional abandon. This theory of error is based on the metaphysical theory of Acintya-bhedābheda as propounded orally by Śree Caitanya and then transmitted into writing by Jīva Gosvāmin in his ṣaṭ-sandarbha and Sarva-Sambādinī. This theistic school holds that non-dualistic consciousness is the ultimate all-sustaining truth which manifests itself in the ascending order in the forms of Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavān[1]. The first two are only imperfect truth, while the latter is the whole of Truth, because it conserves within itself the other two forms. The world is not an indescribable phantasy, but a reality, though transitory. The Jīva also is not 'mithyā', but a real infinitesimal manifestation of the potency of God. God has three potencies :—Cit-śakti, Jīva-Śakti and Māyā-Śakti. The Jīvas and the world are the real transformation of the second and the third potencies, respectively. So, they are real. This transformation of God's potency does not make him mutable in nature. The omnipotent God is unchangeable just like the philosopher's stone. God is possessed of infinite benefic qualities and is 'saviśeṣa', though Brahman is 'nirviśeṣa'. The relation between God and Jīva is acintya-bhedābheda ; for, God and Jīva are both 'saccidānanda' ; but, God is ubiquitous and the lord of Māyā, while the Jīva is infinitesimal and under the thraldom of Māyā. This 'bheda' and 'abheda' conceived together is 'acintya'. The relation between the potency and the potentate also is one of 'acintya-bhedābheda'.

Scholars generally think that 'acintya' and 'anirvacanīya' are interchangeable terms. But, that is furthest from the truth.

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1. The word is 'sambādinī' from the root √bada Sthairye, and not from the root √vada, as is generally misunderstood.

When the facts of experience or scriptural knowledge are related one to the other without pruning or distorting them through logical see-saw and are found to be contradictory, both are accepted together and this relation of the contradictories is called 'acintya'. But, 'anirvacanīya' starts and ends by denying the facts of experience through logic and affirms none of the extremes. Moreover, 'anirvacanīya' means a grade of reality, while 'acintya' has no such sense.

While explaining the quatrain 'Vikalpaḥ khyāti-vādinām' of the 24th śloka of the 11th Skandha of Bhāgavatam, Jīva Gosvāmin says the following : ".....te ca vikalpā mama śaktimayā eveti na parasparam adyāpi vyucchidyante. Tatastat-pratipādyasya śakteścācintyatvam vijñāpya tanmayatvāt sarvatra acintyakhyātitvam eva pratipāditam" (Krama-sandarbha). It is difficult to ascertain what Śrī Jīva exactly means by the expression 'acintya-khyātitvam' here. It may mean that all the 'vikalpas' i.e. the different conflicting khyāti-vādas are to be accepted together with a view to making amends for the deficiencies of the one by the others ; Or, it may mean that the logical antipodes must fraternise to explain an invalid cognition. We shall presently see, while going into details, that Śrī Jīva has a fancy for Anyathākhyāti mixed with a type of Anirvacanīyakhyāti (if that term be at all applicable here) in the field of epistemological error ; still, his view may be called acintya-khyāti in the sense that all kinds of apprehension (not only the invalid ones) are 'acintya' from the stand-point of logical categorisation (Cf. "Śaktayaḥ sarvabhāvānām acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ" VP.).

Jīva Gosvāmin introduces his discussion of error with the assertion of three pre-conditions of error, which are as follow :— (1) Error pertains to determinate cognition and to a 'saviśeṣa' entity, not to indeterminate cognition and to an entity devoid of all characterisation (Nirvikalpa-pratyaye bhramābhāvāt saviśeṣe eva pravartate" P. 98, Sarvasambādinī, vangīya Sāhitya pariṣat ed.), (2) That alone may be superimposed which has an existence somewhere ("Anyatra-siddhasya vastuna eva anyatrāropo mithyākha-puṣpāderāropāsambhavāt" P. 248, ṣaṭ-sandarbha), and (3) error generally thrives on similarity. From the first pre-condition it follows that the attributeless Brahman of the Advaitic conception cannot be the object of error. The second condition

coupled with the third implies that error depends upon super-imposition of an existent entity upon another through cognition of similarity. A totally non-existent entity like the hare's horn cannot be super-imposed anywhere. The perception of a mirage, he says, is due to the awakening through similarity, of the psychosis, having the form of water, which was generated previously through the perception of water and lay so long latent. So, water is not an utter naught ; nor is the water-psychosis, which is a recollection, and the mirage which is similar to water, 'mithyā'. But, the superimposition in identity is 'mithyā' ("Kintu tadabhedena āropa evāyathārthatvāt mithyā P. 248"). So, there is no entitative falsity ; but, falsity pertains only to the superimposition ("Tasmāt vastutastu na Kvacidapi mithyātvam" Ibid). So, according to Śrī Jīva, there is no objective falsity, but mere subjective falsity. He does not hesitate to assert that superimposition of (say) a silver, which exists elsewhere, is possible only in a locus (say, a nacre) where it is really not in all the dimensions of time ("Yatra hi yannāsti kintu anyatraiva dṛśyate tatraive tadāropah siddhaḥ" P. 290 ; Also "Yadyapi tasya trikālameva so' ṛtho nāsti". P. 271, ṣaṭ-sandarbha). So, the silver in the locus of the nacre is 'mithyā' i.e. non-existent. The nacre-silver has mere cognitional existence, but has no purposive activity. According to Śrī Jīva, that alone is real which may be apprehended and may prompt purposive activity ("Śuktyādāveva prātītika-mātra-sattākaṁ rajatādikaṁ mṛṣā. Anyatra yatra ubhayam pratītimarth-kriyā-kāritvañca yunakti bhajate tatra na tathā mṛṣeti" P. 257, Ibid.). The points to be noted here are the following :—(1) Śrī Jīva generally uses the word 'mithyā' in the sense of 'asat', though sometimes he may doubtfully seem to use it in the Advaitic sense of 'sad-asad-bhyām anirvacanīyam'[2], (2) the nacre-silver is 'pratītimātra-sattākam' 'i.e. has only apprehensional existence and that also in 'śuktyādāveva' ; outside nacre, however, it has objective existence. It is not 'pratīti-samaya-sattāka' as the Advaitins aver. So, according to Śrī Jīva, there is no question of alternating negation of existence and non-existence of the silver. Indeed, he clearly asserts that the nacre-silver is not created from the nacre, but is

2. Perhaps the second sense in which he uses the word 'mithyā' is not the Advaitic sense, but is 'svātantryeṇa anirūpya'.

superimposed upon it ("rajatam na śuktyuttham, kintu tasmin adhyastam eva". P. 147, Sarvasambādinī).

Dream-objects also are not creations ; nor are they 'mithyā' in the Advaitic sense. Even the dream-cognition of being beheaded is nothing but the super-imposition by the Māyā of God upon the cogniser of a similar situation that occurred elsewhere.

The world is neither 'mithyā' in the Advaitic sense, nor 'asat', but is merely transitory, though real. So, according to Śrī Jīva, the world is not a tissue of Advaitic 'mithyātva', nor is the Jiva-hood 'mithyā' ; but, identification of the body and the self and such other kinds of super-imposition are alone 'mithyā' in the Advaitic sense. The point needs being stated once again in clear terms that the nacre-silver is 'mithyā' only in the sense of 'asat', while the super-imposition here is 'mithyā' in the Advaitic sense. Hence, the theory partly adopts an intermixture of Anyathākhyāti and Asatkhyāti and partly Anirvacanīyakhyāti. Here the cognition of superimposition is anirvacanīya, though the cognitum is not so, being clearly 'asat'.

But, the world, the identification of the body and the self etc. are 'mithyā' in a deeper metaphysical sense. God is different from the world, the Jīva etc., but the latter are non-different from Him, being manifestations of His potency. So, when these latter are viewed as different from and independent of God, they are 'mithyā'. But, this mithyātva means 'unascertain-ability as an independent entity' i.e. 'acintyatva'. It is from this metaphysical stand-point that one may speak of acintyakhyāti in all the spheres of human experience. In the narrower field of errors, acintyakhyāti is applicable in the sense that all these errors are due to Māyā, a real potency of God, which baffles and is beyond all thinking ("yā ca nayena tarkeṇa viruddhyate tarkātītatayā seyam api acintyā" P. 270, Ṣaṭ-sandarbha),